

Wilton
Richmond Vicinity
Henrico County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-158

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Virginia

Historic American Buildings Survey
Eugene Bradbury, Architect-in-Charge
Grace Securities Building, Richmond, Virginia

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WILTON (Museum)
Richmond Vicinity, Henrico County, Virginia

Owner: Colonial Dames of America (of reconstructed building)

Date of Erection: c.1753 (Removed to Richmond 1932)

Architect: Unknown

Builder: William Randolph III (owner)

Present Condition: Perfect (restored)

Number of Stories: Two and basement

Materials of Construction: Brick (Made on the place)

Other Existing Records: None known

Additional Data: The land on which the house stood before it was moved to Richmond, was granted to Richard Perrin in 1672. Some of this land had been formerly granted to Captain Matthew Edloe on October 2, 1656, and by him assigned to Richard Perrin. (Virginia Historical Magazine, XLI, p. 310).

The brick mansion at Wilton was built by William Randolph III (died 1761), a younger son of William Randolph II (1681-1742), of Turkey Island. Upon his death it was inherited by his son, Peyton Randolph, who married Lucy Harrison, daughter of Benjamin Harrison, Signer of the Declaration of Independence. The Randolphs owned it until about 1860, when the heiress of the family, Kate Randolph, great granddaughter of William Randolph III, married Edward C. Mayo. Since then the estate has frequently changed hands.

The property was finally sold in 1932 to satisfy a mortgage and was bought by a banking institution. This institution was offered substantial sums for the panelling in some of the rooms and the hall to be removed from the State. In order to prevent this and preserve this unusual and historic home, the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Virginia bought the house.

Wilton is completely panelled to the ceiling in all rooms. The original colors on the interior have been restored. As rebuilt the house has been properly restored. Some of the sash, shutters, flooring and hardware are reproductions.

*Ref. Plans of Wilton, Reconstruction of
Wilton, 1890-1900, Wilton, and Wilton.*

HW 12/20/40

ADDITIONAL DATA

(From the leaflet "Wilton" published by the Society of Colonial Dames of Virginia)

WILTON

(Built 1750)

Wilton Road, via Cary Street Road, Richmond, Virginia
(Open to the public daily)

Originally situated six miles below Richmond, on the James River, on a tract of land known as "World's End," this plantation was acquired piece-meal, parcel by parcel, by William Randolph II, of Turkey Island, prior to 1747, when we first read of "William Randolph of Wilton." We know from the inscription found beneath the cornice of the southwest bed room, which reads:

"Sampson Darrell put up this Cornish in the year of our Lord 1753," when the house was completed. It was occupied by William Randolph III, the son for whom it was built, and his wife, Ann Carter Harrison, daughter of Benjamin Harrison, of Berkeley.

A quaint item is found, as to the way in which some of the land was purchased, from a deed book of 1747, where the following is recorded: "One ear of Indian Corn to be paid as rent if demanded on the Feast Day of St. Michael the Archangel so that title may be properly transferred under the statute of uses."

Through a varied succession of ownerships this solidly built brick house has remained practically intact, although suffering both from the revolution and the War Between the States.

The task of removing and re-erecting Wilton upon its new site was put into the hands of experienced and reverential builders, and after careful numbering of each piece, the house was moved piece by piece, and rebuilt, using all of the original material, brick, woodwork, hardware, etc., making an exact reconstruction.

As Wilton stood originally, so it stands today, a fine two-story mansion with basement, built of brick burned near its original site, proven by the fact that brick made in the same locality burns to a similar color. Neither the rubbed brick around the windows and corners, nor the belt course around the house, is new, but is as it was, the idea being to have this trim stand out from the darker brick of the house itself, thus forming an unusual and interesting feature.

The stone steps which were missing when the house was removed, have been replaced, and one enters the broad hall through a massive door of eight panels, with a corresponding door at the opposite end. Heavy iron locks, with large brass keys, as well as H and L hinges, adorn these doors, all original.

Both lower and upper halls, running through the house, are panelled throughout, as are the eight rooms, with their twelve chimney breast closets, on the two floors. The wood being heart pine, or deal, is painted, as it is now an established fact that all pine panelling found in English houses of the period of Wilton, were painted, and never left with the natural finish.

The stairway, with wide steps of easy ascent, the slim, twisted newel post, the walnut hand-rail, the graceful, carved Grecian motif running along the balustrade, consisting of twisted spindles, enriches the beauty of the hall.

The dignity of the proportions of the rooms at Wilton strikes one at once. Of the two rooms on either side, the drawing room is naturally the most notable, the most interesting features being the chimney piece of Carrara marble, flush with the wall, and the panelled alcoves on either side, entered through archways and lighted by narrow side windows. The two windows of the room, with their low, broad sills, have heavy inside blinds, and the panelling of this beautiful room is painted a deep cream. A communicating door leads into the adjoining room, likewise panelled and painted a soft olive.

The colors used in painting the panelling throughout were determined by scraping off the many coats of paint, which had accumulated during the years, down to the original color, which was faithfully reproduced.

Across the hall are the two corresponding rooms, panelled from floor to ceiling, as are the four rooms above, making this fine old mansion, with all rooms and halls and closets completely panelled, unique in existing Virginia houses. For this reason, it is pronounced a treasure beyond price.

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We have it from Washington's Diary that in the year 1775 he "Returned from the Convention, and went to Mrs. Randolph's of Wilton." And Thomas Jefferson, a Randolph himself, and a frequent visitor at his Wilton cousins', says: "Ben Harrison has gone a courting to Wilton."

The notables of the day, distinguished planters, nobility from overseas, and officers of the Military, were all entertained at this hospitable country seat and the Wilton Guest Book would show the names of Virginia's famous families, one and all.